

CHAPTER 5

ADVANCE STORIES, FOLLOW-UPS AND REWRITES

At one time or another in your career as a Navy journalist, you can expect to find yourself writing an advance story, writing a follow-up and rewriting a release received from an outside source.

Producing advance stories, follow-ups and rewrites first requires that you know how to write and, second, that you have a sharp eye for accuracy. You also must have a sound knowledge and background of the subject about which you are writing.

ADVANCE STORY

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Interpret the rules and structure of the advance story.

An advance story calls the public's attention to a coming news event which would possibly be missed if it were covered as a spot news story. It answers the following questions:

- **What** is going to happen?
- **When** is it going to happen?

Advance stories are used to promote practically every scheduled, major, special event. They provide the advance buildup and support required to attract attention, encourage participation and assure success. Few special events could succeed without the benefit of advance announcements by local media.

Suppose your command was open for public visitation. The event probably would be a complete failure if the public did not know in advance when and where it would occur, what activities were planned, who could attend and why the public visitation was being held.

RULES

Three important rules for you to remember when writing and releasing advance stories are as follows:

- Do not shoot the whole works in the first story. In a publicity buildup, plan the release of major

facts so they may provide good news pegs for later advance stories.

- Do not ruin a good thing. Advance stories must contain legitimate news, not mere publicity puffs. Provide facts that readers will find worthwhile and interesting.
- Do not overexploit an event. Schedule your advance stories over a reasonable period of time, give enough new information in each release to keep your audience interested, but do not bore them with unnecessary repetition. The scope and importance of the event will help determine the time frame required to promote it adequately. Usually, three to four weeks will be more than sufficient.

STRUCTURE

Figure 5-1 shows a typical example of an advance release that might be used to announce an Armed Forces Day public visitation. The first release should contain the bare information essentials. Subsequent releases should elaborate on the basic facts presented in the initial announcement. The actual number of advance stories is determined by what you have to tell. Each story should build up to the next one, with the most important news pegs timed for release during the week of the scheduled event.

Figure 5-2 shows examples of leads to advance stories following the initial announcement.

FOLLOW-UP STORY

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Interpret the purpose, reader considerations and structure of the follow-up story.

Like advance stories, follow-ups are part of an overall story. In many news situations, there will be important or significant developments in a story already released. These news developments must then be released to update the original story. This method of reporting is referred to as **follow-ups**, which, as the

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OFFICIAL NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NAVAL AIR STATION TO HOLD PUBLIC VISITATION

Naval Air Station Crevalle will open its gates to the public on Saturday, May 15, in observance of Armed Forces Day.

The announcement was made today by Capt. Rosetta P. Stone, commanding officer of the station. Capt. Stone said the gates will be open to visitors from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and the general public is invited to attend. Parking facilities will be available on the station. Special buses are being scheduled for those who wish to use public transportation.

The theme for this year's Armed Forces Day is "The Modern Military Machine." Naval Air Station Crevalle will join with thousands of other military installations throughout the world in highlighting this theme.

The main attraction at the public visitation will be an hour-long performance by the Blue Angels, the Navy's famous flight demonstration team. Also planned are a number of displays and exhibits highlighting the great strides made in the development of naval aviation during the past 80 years.

Further details will be announced later.

- USN -

Figure 5-1.—Initial advance story containing the bare essentials.

The Blue Angels, the Navy's flight demonstration team, will provide an exciting hour-long program of thrills and precision flying at the Armed Forces Day public visitation at Naval Air Station Crevalle on Saturday, May 15.

Flying single-seat F/A-18 Hornets, the Blue Angels have been thrilling fans of Naval aviation...

A naval aviation "air museum," consisting of 20 aircraft that have played a major role in Navy history during the past 80 years, will be displayed at the Armed Forces Day public visitation at Naval Air Station Crevalle on Saturday, May 15.

Included in the air museum will be...

The former Secretary of the Navy, Jay A. Hawker, will be the guest of honor at the Armed Forces Day public visitation at Naval Air Station Crevalle on Saturday, May 15.

Now the president and CEO of the CompuTronics Computer Corporation of Tenafly, N.J., Mr. Hawker...

A display of naval aviation ordnance, including exhibits of the powerful Phoenix missile and other air-to-air and air-to-ground missiles, will be displayed Saturday, May 15, during the Armed Forces Day public visitation at Naval Air Station Crevalle.

Capt. Rosetta P. Stone, commanding officer of the air station, believes this Armed Forces Day celebration will be the best in the 55-year history of the air station. "I am very excited about..."

Figure 5-2.—Subsequent advance story leads.

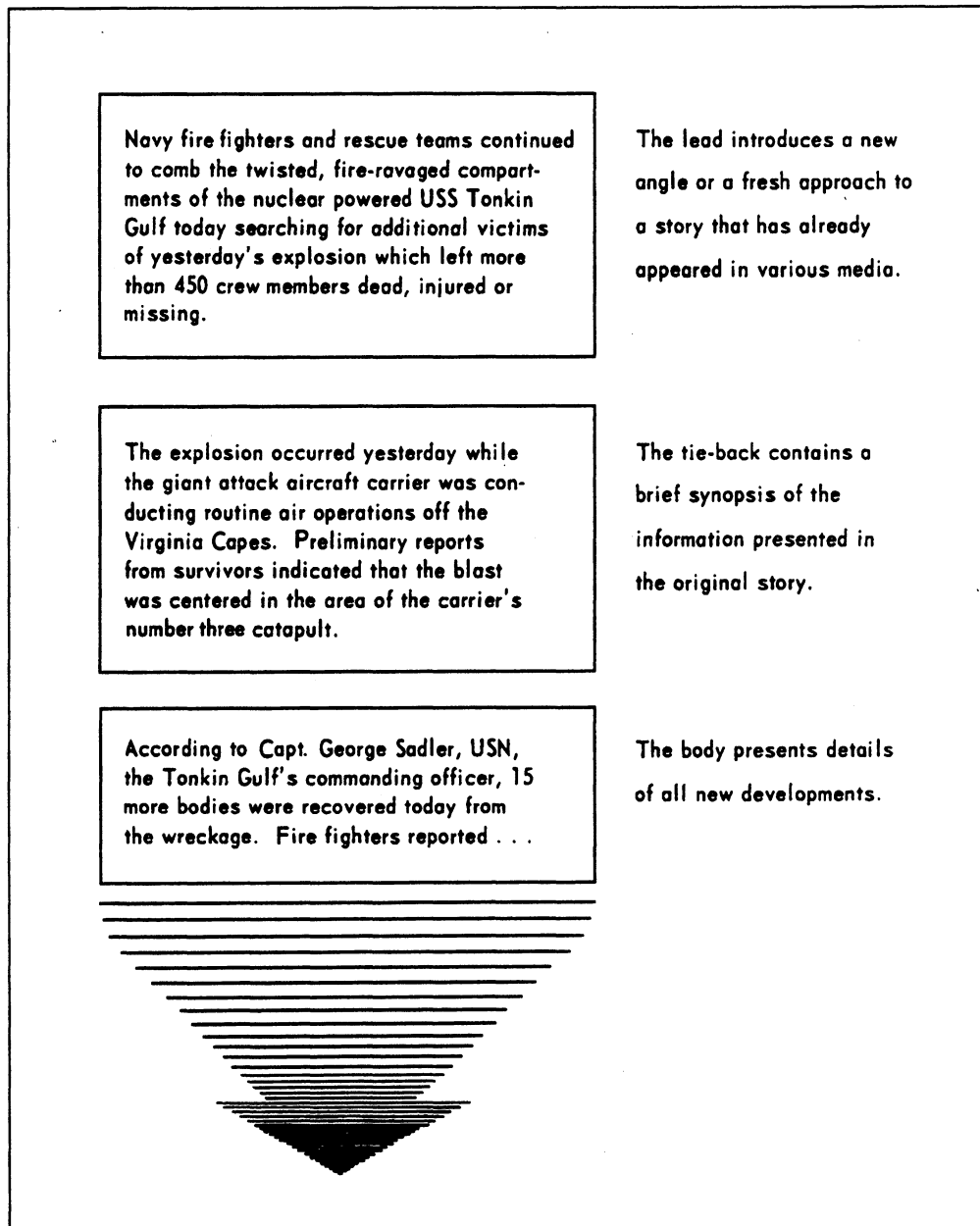


Figure 5-3.—Follow-up story structure.

name implies, follow up the facts presented in the initial spot news story.

READER CONSIDERATIONS

In writing a follow-up story, you must consider the following two distinct groups: the reader who has read the original story and the reader who may not have read the original story. Using this consideration as a guide, your follow-up should be written so as not to bore the former or confuse the latter. You can satisfy the requirements of both readers by using the follow-up story structure explained and diagramed in figure 5-3.

STRUCTURE

As you saw in figure 5-3, the follow-up story contains three distinct components — the lead, tie-back and body. These three components form the structure of the follow-up story which is covered in the following text.

Lead

The lead of a follow-up serves the same purpose as the lead in any other story. In a follow-up story, however, make sure your lead contains a fresh news peg, a new

angle or an entirely different approach from the one used in the original spot news story to which it is related.

Tie-Back

The tie-back consists of one or two paragraphs located between the lead and the body of the story which contains a brief but clear synopsis of the information presented in the original spot news story. The tie-back is used to refresh the memories of those readers who saw the original story and to update those who did not see it.

Body

The body of the story simply presents details of all new developments in the situation. It is usually written in the inverted pyramid style described in Chapter 2.

PRINCIPLES OF REWRITING

LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Recognize the basic principles of rewriting a story in terms of improving copy, updating the story, transforming informal reports, localizing, combining stories and shifting emphasis.

The principles of rewriting are the same as those for good newswriting. If a story does not conform to acceptable newswriting standards, it should be rewritten and made to do so. In other words, you take what someone else has written poorly and convert it into usable news copy.

When you are assigned to a command publication, such as a ship or station newspaper, you will find that a certain amount of your material comes from contributors who do not write in journalistic style. Other material comes to you as handouts and from outside sources, such as clipsheets, naval messages, directives and official correspondence. If you want your publication to contain readable and consistently good material or if you have a local angle and want it to be accepted by commercial news media in your area, it is often necessary to rewrite it.

The following are six basic reasons for rewriting copy:

- To improve poor copy
- To update material

- To transform informal reports into properly written news stories
- To localize general information
- To combine two or more stories
- To change story emphasis

IMPROVING COPY

Often, a person's first attempt at writing a story produces dismal results. Some members of a public affairs office staff may not be thoroughly skilled in the writing craft. Also, material for intended release is often received from other staff offices or departments. These articles frequently need the professional touch of a rewrite reporter. A rewrite reporter organizes a poorly written, improperly arranged item into a sequentially logical finished product.

A rewrite reporter may have to turn a straight news story into a feature. In this event, the rewriter often needs to acquire additional information and can expect to spend some time on the telephone — or in a face-to-face interview — before a finished product can be turned out.

There are times, too, when the rewrite reporter may have to convert a feature story — or a poor attempt at a feature — into a news story. Therefore, a reporter should be proficient in both types of writing before assuming a rewrite assignment.

One of the most frequent faults of badly written copy is the writer's failure to give ample play in the lead to the dominant news element of the story. The rewriter must dig through the story, find the proper lead, put it at the beginning where it belongs and, finally, organize the remainder of the story in coherent form.

UPDATING THE STORY

Often, the rewriter must update a story that has already been printed. So naturally, this person needs a fresh angle to perform this feat. For example, assume that a military aircraft crashes with three people aboard. Two crewmen are killed and the third is missing. A story based on these facts would be released as soon as possible. Then suppose the third man is still alive, that he had managed to parachute from the falling airplane, had made his way back to a highway, caught a ride, telephoned the base and reported his experience. The news of a survivor is the fresh angle needed by the rewriter to update the story of the crash.

TRANSFORMING INFORMAL REPORTS

Another reason for rewrite is to turn an informal report, such as telephoned information, into a properly written news story.

Cooperation between the JO in the office and the JO on the scene is important to the Navy, especially during times of fast-breaking news events, such as those experienced during a major accident or a natural disaster.

The initial release in these cases is generally compiled by one person who receives reports telephoned by reporters in the field. To make a single, comprehensive release, the office-bound JO adds background material available in office files and sometimes works with material brought back from interviews by other public affairs personnel.

Other routine news stories are handled in much the same fashion, without the hectic atmosphere and pressure of disaster stories. For example, the command's MWR petty officer maybe the public affairs office correspondent for athletic events. That does not necessarily mean the correspondent brings a finished story to the public affairs office, but rather, the correspondent telephones a contact there and reports the details of some sports event, and the JO turns that report into a professional release for local media and the command newspaper.

LOCALIZING

Public affairs offices receive news from a variety of people and places. News releases from the DoD, DON, weapons manufacturers, shipyards, aircraft manufacturers and other outlets provide good sources for outside news. However, this news is usually broad in scope and slanted toward a general market. Therefore, it will require a certain degree of refinement and localization to meet the needs of your local readership.

When these releases are rewritten, the local angle should be introduced in the lead and the more general aspects minimized. For example, suppose you are attached to a naval air station and receive a handout from an aircraft manufacturer stating that a new type of aircraft is in production and will soon be made available to the Navy. The release contains a wealth of unclassified information about the plane and its potentialities.

A little research on your part uncovers the fact that an aircraft squadron at your command will be one of the first squadrons in the Navy to receive and operate the new planes. You can now combine your information with that in the general release — playing up the local aspect — and you will have a story of interest to local readers.

COMBINING STORIES

In the case of combining stories, the rewriter often puts two or more stories together to make one. The combination generally results in a roundup story with the first paragraph carrying a combination lead to emphasize various news developments.

An example might be a combination of the following stories:

- A story is carried in the local paper about a hurricane that struck the area.
- A news release is issued by a nearby naval command citing several men assigned to that activity who aided victims of the disaster.

Both of these stories, wrapped up with a fresh release about awards for heroism presented to Navy personnel by the mayor of the nearby town, nets the rewriter a multi-interest, highly readable story.

SHIFTING EMPHASIS

In Navy public affairs, it is standard policy to release the **same** story at the **same** time to **all** media. However, you will get better media mileage if you rewrite the same release several times to meet the needs of different media.

Suppose you wanted to get a certain story published in a variety of publications, such as the local papers, *Navy Times*, *Naval Aviation News*, one or more of the trade publications and several individuals' hometown newspapers. In addition, you think the story is worthy of airtime on radio and television.

Under normal circumstances, you cannot take the time to rewrite the same story several different ways and slant it to the particular needs of different media. Yet there are occasions when this is necessary, if you want to obtain maximum coverage for a special type of story. When this is the case, you will have to keep rewriting

COMBINED SALVAGE OPERATIONS

SAVE THE USS LST 291

A modern epic of the sea — unequalled in recent naval annals for sheer endurance and ingenuity — was written early this year near a tiny, coral-studded island in the Great Bahamas. It involved a grounded amphibious force vessel that was rescued from a treacherous coral reef after almost two weeks of relentless and frustrating efforts by ships and men of the Atlantic Fleet.

The salvage operations, which were carried out in the storm-ridden, shark-infested waters off Eleuthera Island, involved a dozen ships, the Navy's top salvage and underwater demolition teams and aircraft that were employed for everything from the evacuation of survivors to the transportation of explosives.

Practically every trick in the Navy's salvage repertoire was used, and many new ones were thought up to cope with the unusual and near-impossible situations that hindered the immediate rescue of the grounded ship.

The curtain went up on this modern epic of the sea about 0300 on 16 March with the Little Creek-based LST 291 churning its way through the dark and murky waters of the Great Bahamas. ...

Figure 5-4.— *Our Navy* excerpt.

TUGS, FROGMEN, TNT

FREE STRANDED LST

NORFOLK, Va. — Eleven days after running aground in the Bahamas, the shored-up LST 291 rode a two-line to Jacksonville, Fla., and the crews of at least eight vessels which helped it off the beach breathed weary sighs of relief.

In the early pre-dawn hours of March 16, the LST was homeward-bound with 118 Marine passengers and the amphibious gear they had used in the maneuvers at Vieques, P.R. Suddenly, it struck a submerged reef off James Pt., Eleuthera Is., Bahamas, and ripped a jagged hole in her hull.

Fifteen minutes after it hit, word was passed to abandon ship. Its passengers and all of its 96-man crew but a salvage detail scrambled ashore. ...

Figure 5-5.—*Navy Times* excerpt.

the story in the style preferred by each of the different media.

Figures 5-4 through 5-7 show introductions to four different accounts of the same story as published in *Our Navy*, *All Hands*, *Navy Times* and one of several hometown newspapers. Although all the stories concern the rescue of a grounded LST from a coral reef in the

Bahamas, note how the story is rewritten each time to present a new approach or to meet the style of the particular publication for which it was intended. Although a certain amount of additional work and effort was necessary, the rewrites resulted in 100-percent coverage.

BLASTING THEIR WAY TO SAFETY

One of the more unusual salvage stories of the year is the tale of an LST grounded so fast on a coral reef that frogmen had to blast a 1,000-foot channel to free it.

USS LST 291 was churning its way through the waters of the Great Bahamas after completing two weeks of amphibious training exercises at Vieques, Puerto Rico.

About 1,800 yards off James Point, Eleuthera Island, the crunching of steel and stone shattered the silence of the night. The LST had hit a submerged coral reef. The grounding tore a two-foot hole in the evaporator room and twisted, warped and gashed the heavy steel skin in other parts of the ship's hull.

Water started pouring in through these openings and all of the lower compartments became flooded. Personnel were ordered over the side.

Although the nearest land was less than a mile away...

Figure 5-6. —*All Hands* excerpt.

DOING NEXT TO IMPOSSIBLE JUST ROUTINE TO NAVY CMDR.

ROBERT K. THURMAN

Cmdr. Robert K. Thurman, USN, the son of Mrs. R. L. Thurman of Cashmere, is earning high praise and recognition in Norfolk for his abilities as a Navy salvage officer.

His most recent accomplishment as a salvage officer was the rescue of the Landing Ship Tank 291 in the Great Bahamas after it had gone aground on a treacherous coral reef early this year.

With Thurman supervising the salvage efforts, the Navy LST was finally freed after almost two weeks of relentless and frustrating efforts by ships and men of the Atlantic Fleet.

Carried out in the storm-ridden waters off Eleuthera Island, the salvage operations involved a dozen ships, the Navy's top salvage and underwater demolition experts and aircraft that were employed for everything from the evacuation of survivors to the transportation of explosives.

But this was only one of many such operations in Thurman's long and eventful naval career. Other notable achievements for him involved the battleship USS *Missouri* and the military sea transport tanker *Wascissa*.

When USS *Missouri* went aground off Hampton Roads in 1950, Thurman was skipper of the salvage ship USS *Windlass*, which was instrumental in freeing...

Figure 5-7.—Hometown newspaper excerpt.

